

**IPM Grant 2000 - Final Report**  
**Cornell Cooperative Extension of Genesee County**  
**420 East Main St.**  
**Batavia, NY 14020**  
**Project leader: Pat LaPoint**

**Type of Project:** Interactive Hands-On Play and Narrative with accompanying activities

**Title of Project:** The Underground Theater presents: “The Community Beneath Our Feet”

**Description:**

Our project includes a complete kit to be shared by all interested in the IPM project we have produced. Our goal is to better inform students about soil and the organisms in and on the soil and also help them understand that the way we treat soil and plants makes an impact on our environment. The kit contains:

- An original play for school age children where the audience becomes characters in the play.
- A ‘how to video’ to help with background material; IPM information and ideas for developing the play, encouraging the facilitators to make it their own production.
- Reproducible drawings of organism that the audience participants will wear.
- An activity book (“The Bug-tivity Newspaper”) that is passed out to the audience. It contains IPM and good-bug, bad-bug information, experiments and other fun activities for the family that helps them understand more about our environment and how the choices we make affect it.

While scripting the play we included a pre-test situation; when the plot of the play becomes apparent the audience is asked their opinion, by a show of hands, as to whether the main character (Ms. Talltower) should spray the weeds in her lawn. At the conclusion of the play, after all information has been shared and the audience participants are on the stage with the main characters, the audience is again asked whether Ms. Talltower should spray the weeds (post-test situation). The results are discussed in the evaluation section.

**Objective and Implementation:**

The play was performed at seven sites over the summer in various settings such as the Genesee County Fair, Head Start summer programs, summer recreation programs, a summer school assembly (over 200 students at this one!) and a summer library program. We feel the play has passed its pilot testing and evaluations follow in the report. Other facets of the project are complete and in the process of being duplicated for distribution.

As part of the implementation process, publicity notices were created and are making their rounds to various newsletters, displays and public presentations that pertain to the topic. We are creating a mailing list so we may send the completed package out shortly after the first of the year. We have requests in New York State and Ohio at this point. Some people are educators and Master Gardeners in Extension around the state, some are with IPM programs, also elementary school teachers with an active school gardening program, a science museum and farmers with edutainment activities on the farm.

**Evaluations:**

At this point evaluations will have to be from our pilot projects and performances over the summer. As stated before; we wrote a pre-test and post-test situation into the scrip. The pre-test showed that the audience was unsure what they felt; several would raise their hands when asked if Ms. Talltower should spray the weeds in her lawn, the neighboring kids would sometimes follow suit, if somebody seemed to raise their hand. At the end of the play during the post-test - when the audience was asked should Ms. Talltower dig out the weeds with her trowel and ask for advice from Master Gardeners at Cooperative Extension the hands were a resounding "yes" from the audience, no hesitation what-so-ever. While designing this project we realized we were reaching a student audience, however, they are accompanied by adults, who are also participating and getting the message. The 'Bug-tivity Newspaper' is also slanted for family participation. It has a message about integrated pest management, understanding insect life cycles, good bugs and bad bugs and experiments and activities in a fun filled format.

In situations such as the County Fair where the play was repeated several evenings in a row, we watched kids come back each night to be a part of the fun.

The "Bug-tivity Newspaper" is being printed now, we will also test this on students to see their reactions. The 'how-to video' has been reviewed and is in the process of being duplicated at the moment. Distribution to people on the mailing list will begin shortly. In public educator presentations and casual conversations alike; the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

"We have been looking all over for something like this! How soon can we get a copy?" "I have often thought about doing something along these lines but was afraid I would do something wrong, now you have solved the problem". "Please come back next summer and be a part of our programming". "Hurry, I need this for after school programming."

At this point, this is informal and anecdotal evaluation. I will include a survey with the materials when distributed in hopes people will give us hard copy information. We will be glad to share more formal evaluations when the kits have been distributed, used and surveys are returned. I work with the New York State Agriculture in the Classroom and am an educator with Cooperative Extension. I know from the materials available that this is something new and will be widely used by educators, 4-H Clubs and Master Gardener programs.

**Analysis of project:**

Grant monies have been used frugally, fifty kits are being prepared for distribution along with an evaluation survey to be returned after use. We are unable to anticipate demand and are concerned how to fill requests when the initial kits are gone.